

**Increasing in Holiness
Intelligence for Temptation
(Gen. 3:1-8)**

Intro: Our government has had a central intelligence agency for a long time. After 9/11 The Department of Homeland Defense was formed. And now we are hearing more about the NSA, the national security agency. All these organization have one goal—to keep our citizens protected from a terrorist attack. They also have one essential mode of operation—to gather as much intelligence about the enemy as possible. Already we can see how invading the enemy’s domain and learning about their tactics can help foil their attempts to bring destruction to our citizens and property.

This is also a good strategy for the Christian, since we too have an enemy that seeks to destroy us.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

But we can foil his efforts if we know how he works. With that in mind let’s revisit a familiar text—Gen. 3. Our lesson Wednesday night got me thinking once more about the first temptation and how it might have been prevented. Moses here gives the account of the fall of man and woman into sin. While doing so he gives us insight into how the devil works. This intelligence can help us better prepared to defeat him!

We can conceptualize Satan’s attack in five distinct steps (Virkler).

He maximized the restriction.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1)

Neither Eve nor even the Hebrew reader would have been able to know the wicked personality that lie behind the first temptation. His existence and malevolence was made clearer with the continuing revelation of God. The NT makes clear that this "serpent" was Satan, the adversary of God, whose goal it is to destroy the perfection of the relationship between God and His creatures.

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (Rev. 12:9)

Think about the way the serpent spoke to Eve. Did Satan not know what God had said? Undoubtedly he did. So, why does he ask it this way?

Is it not to set Eve up? To make her question what God had said? If we could re-word, “Did God really say you couldn’t eat from any tree?”

Sarna points out that the word "say" itself already diminishes the authority of God's word, since God had not merely "said" something; he had "commanded" it.

And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'" (Gen. 3:2-3)

Did Eve quote God accurately? Note these slight but significant changes.

She omitted the word "freely". This word called to mind the generosity of God; but God's generosity has been diminished in her thinking and God's restrictiveness has been increased.

Thus, she even adds a restriction not found in God's original commandment: nor shall you "touch it".

Hence, Satan has cleverly made Eve think more about God's restrictiveness than His generosity!

God had given the first humans all the trees of the garden except one. They were given abundance provisions. God had been incredibly generous with them. Satan wanted Eve to question God's generosity and focus on the restriction.

And so he does today! He wants us to think that God is being unduly strict with us! He wants us to believe that there is more enjoyment to life than God is willing to let us experience. And so he seeks constantly to maximize the restriction. You Christians can't have any fun.

He minimized the consequences of sin.

Actually we could say, he denied the consequences of sin. He argued that what God had promised as a consequence of disobedience would not occur!

And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die!" (Gen. 3:4)

Did you know that Satan was the first teacher of the doctrine of "once saved, always saved"? He contended that Eve's behavior could not affect God's actions; nor her status with God

Satan's approach was to minimize or even deny the evil consequences of her sinful behavior.

Again we see that happening today.

He does not want people to think about the consequences of drunkenness or fornication or idolatry.

Sin will not hurt me!

He re-labeled the action.

"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:5)

How does Satan persuade a person that sin is not a sin.

He just gives it another name!

By eating the forbidden fruit, you won't be doing evil; you'll be knowing evil!

Satan's domain is not a "no spin zone". In fact, he'll spin every act of disobedience to make it look innocent and harmless.

He'll change the name:

He won't call it "shedding of innocent blood"; he'll call, "exercising reproductive choice".

He won't call it "fornication"; he'll call it "an alternative lifestyle."

He won't call it "drunkenness"; he'll call it "unwinding" or "consuming an adult beverage."

He won't call it "lasciviousness"; he'll call it "adult entertainment."

He promises another outcome!

Satan says to Eve, "This will be not a moment of death! Instead it will be an epiphany! Eve would see things she's never seen before! She would be as god; she would know what God knows!

And so today one sin after another is presented as having a positive benefit:

Reproductive choice will bring "freedom"

Alternative lifestyle will bring "self-actualization"

Drunkenness will bring "relief from life's pressures".

Lasciviousness will bring "harmless pleasure."

He accentuated the desirability of sin.

Suddenly that forbidden fruit looked entirely different to Eve. Had she looked at it through God's eyes, she would have been repulsed. There is nothing good that brings death. There is nothing pretty that brings death. There is nothing desirable that brings death. But now her vision is changed. She looks through a Satanic filter.

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. (Gen. 3:6)

The forbidden fruit is now seen through Satan's eyes:

Good for food

Attractive to the eyes

Desirable to make one wise

Satan cleverly packages every sin. He presents it with beautiful wrapping. He shows everyone laughing. He excites the possibilities of opening the package.

He assumed the place of God.

When the narrative begins, God is the one who was truthful and generous. But when the narrative ends, Eve has become persuaded that God is a liar and unlovingly restrictive. And what Satan had done is cleverly step into God's place. By his denials of God's word and by his clever obscurations, he convinced Eve that he was the truthful and generous one. Only he would reveal the whole story! Only he would give her what God had not been willing to give! Thus, we see that the real evil of sin is seen not in the mere exchange of a right act for a wrong one, the substitute of one law for another law. The real evil of sin is in the assassination of the character of God!

Think of this! Satan could not spiritually murder Eve, until he had first "spiritually murdered God"! And when he had successfully killed God, Eve was like putty in His hands!

When we accept his presentation of God, we are vulnerable to every temptation! If he can get us to start thinking about God in the wrong way, then he can take us.

That's why we cannot focus too much on God—upon His goodness, His faithfulness, His grace. For it is our belief in these things that inoculates us from Satan's accusations about God.

Conclusion: Tomorrow you'll face the enemy, I hope, a little smarter. Through this intelligence report, you'll know what to look for!